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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN ARKANSAS: FOURTH QUARTER 2005

In the fourth quarter of 2005, Pulaski County recorded the highest wage level, \$749, among the three Arkansas counties with employment of 75,000 or more. Pulaski County's wage, however, was only slightly above the \$743 averaged in Benton County. Washington County had the lowest weekly wage (\$685), but registered the highest over-the-year wage gain (2.4 percent) among the three large counties in the State. On the other hand, the county with the highest wage level, Pulaski, actually experienced a 1.1-percent drop in wages over the year. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that weekly wage levels in Arkansas' large counties were above the statewide average of \$633, but below the national average of \$825. Employment in these three counties represented more than one-third of all jobs in Arkansas. (See table A.)

Over-the-year wage changes

Washington County's 2.4-percent over-the-year wage gain in the fourth quarter of 2005 was above the 1.5-percent increase for the nation. Washington's percentage increase in wages placed in the top one-quarter of the national ranking at 80th highest among the 322 large counties in the country. Not far behind in the ranking at 87th was Benton County with a wage gain of 2.3 percent over the year. In contrast to the above-average wage growth in Washington and Benton Counties, Pulaski County was 1 of 72 counties nationwide to register a decline in wages during the period. The 1.1-percent decrease in Pulaski County placed it in the bottom one-quarter, ranking 284th in the country.

Table A. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 3 largest counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2005 (2)

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	December 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, fourth quarter 2004-05 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	133,834.6	\$825	--	1.5	--
Arkansas	1,168.4	633	45	1.6	26
Benton, Ark.	91.5	743	191	2.3	87
Pulaski, Ark.	248.7	749	180	-1.1	284
Washington, Ark.	91.9	685	261	2.4	80

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Average Weekly Wages in Arkansas, Fourth Quarter 2005 (continued)

Leading the nation in average weekly wage growth was Orleans, La., with an increase of 28.7 percent from the fourth quarter of 2004. Harrison, Miss., was second with 18.9-percent growth followed by Jefferson, La., at 16.2 percent. The rates of gain for these Gulf Coast areas were boosted as a result of the disproportionate job and pay losses in lower-paid industries following Hurricane Katrina. York, Pa., and New Castle, Del., rounded out the top five with increases of 10.8 and 9.0 percent, respectively. Among the 72 counties experiencing over-the-year declines in average weekly wages, Clayton County, Ga., and Williamson County, Texas, each had the largest decrease, -8.6 percent, followed by the counties of Trumbull, Ohio (-5.8 percent), Brown, Wis. (-5.1 percent), and Anoka, Minn. (-4.7 percent).

At the statewide level, average weekly wages in Arkansas rose 1.6 percent between the fourth quarter of 2004 and the fourth quarter of 2005, ranking 26th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Alabama, California, Idaho, and Kansas also had 1.6-percent wage gains and, as a result, the same ranking. Louisiana led the U.S. with over-the-year wage growth of 7.4 percent. Delaware and Wyoming were next in line with increases of 6.2 and 5.8 percent, respectively, followed by the District of Columbia (4.9 percent) and Mississippi (4.6 percent). Four states reported a decline in average weekly wages: Minnesota (-3.2 percent), Wisconsin (-0.8 percent), Ohio (-0.4 percent), and Indiana (-0.1 percent). (See table 1.)

Wage levels

While two of the three large Arkansas counties had above-average wage growth from the fourth quarter of June 2005 to the fourth quarter of June 2006, all had lower-than-average wage levels. These 3 were among 217 counties nationwide reporting wages below the U.S. average of \$825 per week. The weekly wage in Pulaski County, \$749, was 9 percent below that for the nation and ranked 180th among the 322 large counties. The wage level in Benton County averaged \$743 per week, 10 percent lower than that for the U.S., and ranked 191st. Washington County's wage level of \$685 ranked among the bottom one-quarter at 261st, 17 percent lower than the national average. (See table A.)

Among the 322 largest counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,684. Fairfield, Conn., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,496, followed by Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,490), and Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,412). Three of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo, all in California), while 3 more were located in or around the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (Arlington, Va., Fairfax, Va., and Washington, D.C.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

At the other end of the wage scale, the lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron, Texas (\$506), followed by Hidalgo, Texas (\$512), Webb, Texas (\$548), Yakima, Wash. (\$552), and Horry, S.C. (\$556). The wage level in each of the five lowest-ranked counties was one-third or less of the wage level reported for the highest-ranked county in the nation, New York.

Average Weekly Wages in Arkansas, Fourth Quarter 2005 (continued)

On a statewide level, Arkansas' average weekly wage was 23 percent below the national average in the fourth quarter of 2005. The State's \$633 wage level ranked close to the bottom--45th--among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Arkansas' weekly wage was between those of neighboring Oklahoma (\$642, 44th) and Mississippi (\$614, 48th), but well below wages in other nearby states including Tennessee (\$736, 25th) and Missouri (\$723, 28th). (See table 1.)

Nationwide, average wage levels were greater than \$1,000 per week for the top five in the rankings: District of Columbia (\$1,354), Connecticut (\$1,080), New York (\$1,048), Massachusetts (\$1,026), and New Jersey (\$1,011). Average weekly wages in this group were more than 20 percent above the national average. At the other end of the scale, four states reported wages 75 percent or less of the national average: South Dakota (\$589), Montana (\$591), and Mississippi and North Dakota (\$614 each).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.7 million employer reports cover 133.8 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been adjusted (see Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2004 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the fourth quarter 2004 version of this news release. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2004* is now available for sale from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside of Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512-2104. Also, the 2004 bulletin is available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm>. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, see <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm>. For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Dallas Information Office at 214-767-6970 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Dallas BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm>. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Dallas by dialing 214-767-9613 and requesting document number 9556.

NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2005(2)

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	December 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, 4th quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	133,834.6	\$825	-	1.5	-
Alabama	1,929.6	706	32	1.6	26
Alaska	291.8	793	19	1.5	31
Arizona	2,596.6	769	22	2.5	13
Arkansas	1,168.4	633	45	1.6	26
California	15,515.7	944	6	1.6	26
Colorado	2,234.8	835	12	0.5	43
Connecticut	1,671.0	1,080	2	2.2	17
Delaware	422.9	937	7	6.2	2
District of Columbia	673.5	1,354	1	4.9	4
Florida	7,999.0	752	23	1.9	21
Georgia	4,007.3	794	18	2.7	11
Hawaii	619.6	736	25	1.8	22
Idaho	625.5	628	46	1.6	26
Illinois	5,830.1	887	9	1.1	35
Indiana	2,906.4	705	33	-0.1	48
Iowa	1,465.0	672	39	0.7	41
Kansas	1,325.6	680	37	1.6	26
Kentucky	1,783.6	682	36	0.1	46
Louisiana	1,783.8	710	31	7.4	1
Maine	598.2	662	42	0.3	45
Maryland	2,540.2	910	8	3.5	6
Massachusetts	3,206.4	1,026	4	2.0	18
Michigan	4,320.9	835	12	0.0	47
Minnesota	2,687.5	808	15	-3.2	51
Mississippi	1,114.5	614	48	4.6	5
Missouri	2,700.9	723	28	2.0	18
Montana	418.9	591	50	3.3	8
Nebraska	900.2	663	41	2.3	15
Nevada	1,253.2	775	21	0.9	39
New Hampshire	630.8	848	11	1.1	35
New Jersey	3,988.9	1,011	5	0.8	40
New Mexico	793.2	658	43	2.0	18
New York	8,531.8	1,048	3	2.9	10
North Carolina	3,916.7	718	29	0.4	44
North Dakota	332.7	614	48	2.3	15
Ohio	5,359.4	751	24	-0.4	49
Oklahoma	1,502.5	642	44	2.4	14
Oregon	1,686.0	728	27	1.3	33
Pennsylvania	5,619.5	801	17	0.6	42
Rhode Island	483.6	787	20	2.7	11
South Carolina	1,830.0	666	40	1.7	24
South Dakota	378.6	589	51	1.4	32
Tennessee	2,742.6	736	25	1.2	34
Texas	9,821.7	823	14	3.0	9
Utah	1,149.3	687	34	3.5	6
Vermont	308.1	684	35	1.0	38
Virginia	3,637.5	855	10	1.7	24
Washington	2,794.2	804	16	1.8	22
West Virginia	704.3	627	47	1.1	35
Wisconsin	2,773.4	713	30	-0.8	50
Wyoming	258.4	678	38	5.8	3
Puerto Rico	1,093.7	474	(5)	1.7	(5)
Virgin Islands	44.9	664	(5)	0.5	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.